DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 374 CS 203 898

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TITLE Accountability of the Business Communication Instructor.
PUB DATE Dec 77
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Business Communication Association (Chicago, Illinois, December 28-30, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; *Business Communication; *College Faculty; Educational Accountability; Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; *Faculty Evaluation; Higher Education; Measurement Goals; Research; Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Teachers of business communication, along with teachers in other disciplines, must develop ways of responding to demands for faculty evaluation. The first section of this paper considers three questions relevant to any kind of faculty evaluation: To whom should a teacher be accountable? What criteria should be the touchstones for evaluation? and, How should the results of faculty evaluation be used? The second section discusses relevant research studies, describes faculty evaluation procedures used in several business schools, and suggests three guiding principles for faculty evaluation: to state goals in terms of measurable, overt action; to be precise in language, avoiding variant interpretations; and to qualify the conditions under which a goal is to be completed. (GW)

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Accountability of the Business Communication Instructor

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The term accountability has taken on new emphasis, replacing other academic buzzwords. Given impetus out of the agonies of the 60's, the cry for teaching evaluation touches all who profess, who teach, who guide minds in this process we call education.

Teachers of business communication are not exempt. They too have either resisted or have been propelled along by colleagues who felt faculty evaluation was the right thing to do. But the term "right" has a different nuance, depending on who is doing the evaluating, determining the accountability, or reading the results.

In my brief statement I cannot collate all the arguments relative to evaluative procedures. My purpose here is twofold: (1) to summarize the persistent questions facing any kind of faculty evaluation; and (2) to suggest an evaluative procedure of faculty by people who teach business communication.

I.

QUESTIONS REGARDING EVALUATION OF FACULTY

Who is the perfect teacher, and within this room who is the perfect teacher of business communication? That question portents agony. Clare Rose, President of the Evaluation and Training Institute of Los Angeles suggests that "hundreds of studies were designed to isolate an index of instructional skills, and, almost without exception, all failed to yield even a hint."[1]

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I cannot accept that. Scholarly studies, written by distinguished educators, have produced reliable data. But, a single criterion of who is a "good" teacher is not easily determined.[2]

To whom should a teacher be accountable? Constituencies are powerful. The administration wants tripartite feedback on teaching, research, and service, including student-faculty ratios. A legislature wishes a report on their investment. Society, parents, wish to know what their children have learned. You, as faculty, wish to know what you have taught the student.

And in the end, students wish to have supreme power in holding teachers accountable to them.

What criteria should be the touchstones for evaluation? A forest of terms has proliferated in the academic woods, each one vieing for dominance. Thus rubbery phrases as "innovative in the classroom," "creative handling of communication cases," or "dynamic instructor" are prefatory headings to evaluations.

My last question is, how should the results of faculty evaluation be used? There is a school of thought that suggests, specifically Wilbert McKeachie, President of the American Psychological Association, that "The potential harm (of Deans seeing student ratings) is that a dean might be tempted to list the average rating of each faculty member and then give raises according to which instructor had the highest average rating. That procedure might be better than those now used, but it fails to take account of the complexities of teaching."[3] In reality evaluations are used for tenure, promotion, salary, retention, self-feedback, student feedback, awards, punishments, rankings, and a series of

other purposes.

May I conclude: little agreement exists as to the goals of faculty evaluation; the concept of effective teaching is vague; measuring teaching is an inexact science; and evaluation results are inconsistently used.

With that negative beginning one might conclude that accountability for any of us is impossible to measure and that we should forget it. You, as decent teachers, cannot accept that. Neither can I.

II.

EVALUATION OPTIONS FOR TEACHERS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Let me, therefore, narrow our focus. I maintain that the accountability of the business communication instructor should be to the student and to self, with the central goal of improving instruction. It is a given that each teacher--accepting the guiding principle of the AAUP--will have "(1) an accurate factual description of what an individual does as a teacher, (2) various measures of the effectiveness of these efforts, and (3) fair consideration of the relation between these efforts and the institution's and department's expectation and support."[4]

Accepting those strictures, let me view some research studies and evaluation forms of faculty in business schools and then propose an evaluative process applicable to communication instructors.

A rather general form is the following,[5] concentrating entirely upon teaching and completed by the administration.

MERIT RATING CRITERIA

Teaching Scale: 0 - 5

_____student advising
_____accessibility to student
_____quality of teaching--student feedback, faculty feedback, innovativeness in the classroom, use of appropriate media
graduate faculty
_____graduate faculty
_____MBA committee chairmanships
_____teaching load
_____willingness to take occasional overload
_____advisor to student organizations

While the preceding evaluation is completed by the administration, the following example[6] moves on the basis of ultimate goals for the student. It is a guidance document for faculty, with additional statements for immediate and intermediate goals.

ULTIMATE CRITERIA

The students learned what the instructor was trying to teach
- - in cognitive, affective, and/or psychmotor development
- - in rate and/or absolute achievement

Learning continued after the formal experience ended
- - rate and/or extent of later learning known

The learning experience positively affected the attitudes and/or behavior of the teacher, other faculty members, and administrators within the immediate learning community.

Enrollment levels were sustained or increased in subsequent offerings of the learning experience.

A brief abstract of how we proceed at the Graduate School of Business at The University of Michigan is the following:

(Scale 1-5; low to high)

Your opinion of instructor compared to average of other instructors in your experience:

Holding your attention in class _____
Giving understandable explanations _____

Organization of lectures and activities _____
Knowledge of subject matter _____
Stimulation of class discussion _____

Your opinion of course compared to average of other courses in your experience.

Demand for concentration and sustained effort _____
Demand for intelligence _____
Demand for creativity _____
Clarity of course objectives _____
Relevance of class activities to course objectives _____

But you also possess examples. Rather, let me summarize, with the help of research done by Wilson Haig[7] at the University of Nevada in Reno, the major criteria used in evaluating faculty at schools of business. The data are taken from 95 member schools of the AACSB:

INSTRUCTOR PERFORMANCE

Instructor Characteristics	Number of Schools probing this item	As a percent of all respondents
Fairness in grading	46	73
Knowledge of subject	40	63
Availability outside classroom	39	62
Willingness to discuss various viewpoints	33	52
Enthusiasm	33	52
Interest in helping students	32	51
Classroom preparation	31	49
Fairness of exams	29	46
Encourages class participation/ discussion	28	44
Interest level developed in the classroom	28	44

In addition to specific instructor evaluation there is evaluation of the course. Haig's study[8] also discovered the five most

common questions about a course:

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Data	Number of schools probing this item	As a percent of all respondents
Clearly written text	24	38
Course contribution to business education	22	35
Workload	17	27
Overall course rating	16	25
Level of difficulty	12	19

There is now the question whether students have the capability to make evaluative judgments about their instructor. Lein and Merz of Boise State[9] discovered that students had little difficulty honestly expressing their opinion, and, as business students indicated the following degrees of difficulty in evaluating an instructor.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTY THEY EXPERIENCED EVALUATING AN INSTRUCTOR OR COURSE

Characteristics evaluated by students	Mean Response
(Scale: 1-very difficult--4-simple)	
Would you take another class from this instructor?	3.30
Does instructor accept questions?	3.02
Does instructor explain clearly?	2.92
Compare course workload with other courses	2.89
Is instructor available in office?	2.87
Quality of the textbook	2.57
Have you gained knowledge from this course?	2.58
Amount of work required for the credit received?	2.58
Does instructor grade fairly?	2.45
Is instructor sensitive to students' feelings?	2.42

Finally, in response to the question what qualities would you seek in hiring new teachers, the following data surfaced:[10]

SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO QUESTION: WHAT QUALITIES WOULD YOU SEEK IN HIRING NEW TEACHERS?

Qualities that students would seek in new teachers	Percent of responses
1. Ability to teach	68
2. Personality	48
3. Sensitivity	43
4. Knowledge of discipline	41
5. Professional and academic achievement	40
6. Practical experience	37
7. Innovative teacher	28
8. Fair grading	12
9. Open-mindedness	11

We have not denigrated the preceding evaluative instruments. They have worked and are being used by our colleagues in business schools, including teachers of business communication. Whether the evaluative forms are useful to you is your decision. But I feel we as teachers of business communication can improve them. We can do better.

If you accept the premise that feedback to yourself and to your students is a preeminent goal, then a goal-centered evaluation can be used, i.e., describing goals as measurable objectives. What I'm suggesting, then, is to include those goal statements only relevant to your communication course, in addition to other criteria established by your school.

Traditionally objectives are unclearly stated. They are vague, unclear generalizations that are open to many interpretations,

as seen in the following comparison:

COURSE GOAL STATEMENTS

Numerous interpretations	Less interpreations
To know	To write
To accept	To list
To follow	To identify
To learn	To compare
To fully grasp	To chronologically develop

My initial suggestion is that goals for a written or oral communication course should be stated in terms of clear overt action expected of the student. Performance, measurable performance, is an acceptable measure as to whether the student has achieved the objectives of the course. Let me take a few examples: "to improve your writing" and "to do better in oral communication" are vague statements, difficult to measure. On the other hand, a goal such as "to develop a problem solving report according to the five steps of the reflective pattern" is measurable, is demonstrable, is stated in terms of terminal student behavior.

We in communication are lucky: we are concerned with precision in language. We can bring specificity to measurable goals and in all assignments quickly determine student behavior in light of those goals.

One other criterion must be added: suggesting the conditions under which a communication achievement should occur. The goal statement "to construct a memorandum" lies in academic limbo: vague in meaning, open to questionable interpretations, hard to measure. By adding a qualifier or by imposing limits, the student has a clearer idea and the teacher has a more measurable parameter. Examples are these: "without reference to your text, organize in a cause-effect order an informative memorandum on the subject of computer crime." Or, "given the criteria of brevity, sentence variety, and past tense, recommend in a memorandum your proposal to the problem case."

While the preceding examples are more relevant to specific class assignments, a similar format can be applied to the entire course, as for example:

By the end of the course you should be able to:

--construct a persuasive memorandum using five different patterns of idea development

--identify logical forms of support used in informative and persuasive speaking

--write a business report that includes seven major parts

--critique a writer or speaker in light of criteria suggested by your textbook and instructor

In both instances, class assignments or end-of course goals, we have measurable terminable behavior, ideal for instructor and student feedback.

Three principles can now be stated: (1) state goals in terms of measurable overt action; (2) be precise in language, avoiding variant interpretations; and (3) qualify the conditions under which a goal is to be completed.

Then we can achieve, as Rose says,[11]

> to render judgments about an individual teacher's instructional effectiveness and to provide faculty members with means to improve their teaching. Faculty evaluation is not and end in itself. It is the means to improving instruction; to providing a better education for our students.

Notes

1. Clare Rose, "Stalking the Perfect Teacher." Chronicle of Higher Education (October 4, 1976). 24.

2. For a detailed analysis of studies on evaluation see, Frank Costin, William T. Greenough, Robert J. Menges, "Student Ratings of College Teaching: Reliability, Validity and Usefulness." Review of Educational Research (December, 1971). 511-535.

3. Wilburt McKeachie, "Effective College Teaching: Research on Teacher-Student Interactions," Research News 23 (December, 1972). 5.

4. "Statement on Teaching Evaluation," AAUP Bulletin (Summer, 1974). 169.

5. Omer L. Carey, "Evaluating the Total Contribution of Faculty," Collegiate News and Views (Spring, 1974). 15.

6. L. Richard Meeth, "The Stateless Art of Teaching Evaluation," Change n.d. p. 4.

7. Wilson Haig, "Teacher Evaluation: A Note on Current Usage." Collegiate News and Views 29(Spring, 1976). 2.

8. Ibid., p. 2.

9. Charles D. Lein, C. Mike Merz, "Student Evaluation: What Are They Half Telling Us?" Collegiate News and Views 30(Fall, 1976). 3.

10. Ibid., p. 3.

11. Rose, loc. cit.